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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **sSB 322**

#### ***AN ACT CONNECTING THE PUBLIC TO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES.***

#### **SUMMARY:**

This bill requires the Office of the Healthcare Advocate, by January 1, 2015, to establish an information and referral service to help residents and providers receive information, timely referrals, and access to behavioral health care providers. It specifies the responsibilities of the healthcare advocate or her designee in establishing the service.

The bill requires the office, by February 1, 2016, and annually thereafter, to report to the Committee on Children and the Human Services, Insurance, and Public Health committees. The report must identify gaps in services and the resources needed to improve behavioral health care options for state residents.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HEALTHCARE ADVOCATE**

The bill requires the healthcare advocate or her designee to collaborate with stakeholders, including at least (1) state agencies, (2) the Behavioral Health Partnership, (3) community collaboratives, (4) the United Way's 2-1-1 Infoline program, and (5) providers. The advocate or designee must identify factors that prevent residents from obtaining adequate and timely behavioral health care services. These include, among other things, gaps in private behavioral health care services and coverage and barriers to accessing care.

The advocate or designee must (1) coordinate a public awareness and educational campaign directing residents to the information and referral service and (2) develop data-reporting mechanisms to determine its effectiveness. The latter must track:

1. the number of referrals to providers, by type and location of providers;
2. waiting time for services; and
3. the number of providers who accept or reject requests for service based on type of health care coverage.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Behavioral Health Partnership***

This program, operated by the departments of Children and Families, Mental Health and Addiction Services, and Social Services, provides a range of behavioral health services to people with public insurance, such as children enrolled in HUSKY A (Medicaid) or HUSKY B (the State Children's Health Insurance Program). ValueOptions, a national managed behavioral health care company, serves as the program's administrative services organization.

## **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 17 Nay 0 (03/20/2014)